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ABSTRACT

One in a series of ten mini-manuals on office communication and proofreading, this booklet for business and office students provides instruction in the use of periods, question marks, exclamation marks, and semicolons. Included are terminal and specific objectives, punctuation rules and related information, and tasks for practice. A test over the information presented concludes the manual. (Test answers are included in the teacher's manual for the series--CE 008 821.) (BM)

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Dead Ends

An Office Education Mini Curriculum Manual on

ERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS

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What you'll find in this booklet

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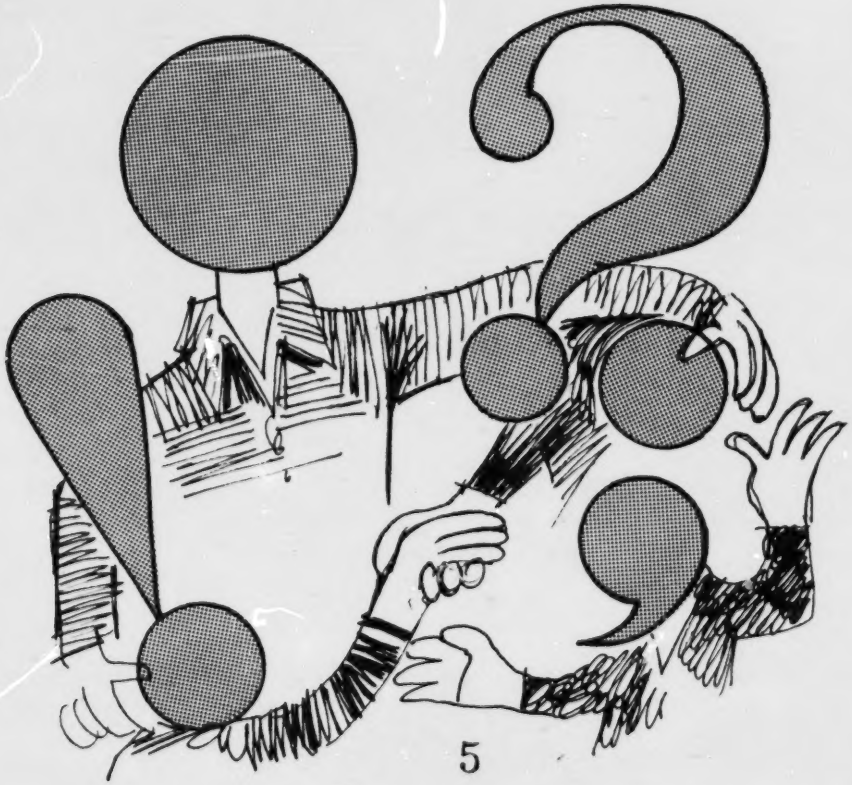

THE POINT OF THIS BOOKLET
(i.e., Terminal Objective)

When you are able to show that you know (and can apply) all the rules given in this booklet concerning periods, questions, exclamations, and semicolons – that means, when you've studied the objectives, read the INFO pages carefully, done the TASKS successfully, and gotten at least 85 per cent on the TEST at the end – you'll be able to catch errors in the use of periods, question marks, exclamation points, and semicolons on almost any job you get.

OBJECTIVE

OEM5-2

SPECIFICALLY, WHAT YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO DO:

1. Match the terms *period, question mark, exclamation point* with given definitions.
2. Choose among given sentences those which are declarative sentences needing periods.
3. Complete given partial statements concerning imperative statements and write examples.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of punctuation rules for indirect questions by distinguishing among given unpunctuated sentences which require periods and which, question marks.
5. Write in numerical form, using periods properly, given numbers expressed in words.
6. Insert periods correctly in a given passage containing abbreviations.
7. Select among given sentences involving quotations those that are correctly punctuated.

8. Distinguish among given sentences which require question marks and which, periods.

9. Select from among given sentences involving quotations those which show correct use of question marks.

10. State briefly the meaning of a question mark enclosed in parentheses.

11. Distinguish among given statements concerning the use of exclamation points those that are true and those that are not.

12. Choose from given statements containing independent clauses those that are correctly joined and punctuated.

13. Distinguish among given statements concerning the use of a semicolon those that are true and those that are not.

I AM.
I AM?
I AM!

1st THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

At the end of each sentence, use a period, question mark, or exclamation point – as appropriate.

Now all you have to learn is "what's appropriate where?" As a start, here are examples showing correct uses of each of the first three of the "dead ends" – the *period,* the *question mark,* and the *exclamation point* (we'll get to the *semicolon* later; it is kind of a special "dead end." But if you can't wait to find out about it, look at the 12th and 13th THINGS TO KNOW).

My name is Ellen. (PERIOD)
What is your name? (QUESTION MARK)
What a great party! (EXCLAMATION POINT)

Note that all three bring the sentence to a dead end. But also note that each brings the sentence to a different kind of end.

The *period* is used most. The period says simply, "STOP – this is the end of this sentence."

The *question mark* says, "STOP – this is the end of a sentence that asks a question."

The *exclamation point* says, "STOP – this is the end of a sentence that deserves emphasis – it exclaims; it has something exciting in it."

Choices, choices, choices! When do you choose what? For example: I am. I am? I am!
So, let's go on to more rules . . .

2nd THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use a period at the end of a statement of fact.

"Statement-of-fact" sentences are sometimes called "declarative sentences." They declare something. For example:

Her hair is naturally that color.

Don't get fooled by that word, "declare," Here's a sentence that doesn't seem very positive, but it's still "declarative." *(In fact, that's why we prefer to call it a "statement-of-fact" sentence.)*

I think that maybe her hair is naturally that color – perhaps.

It "declares" or "states the fact" that *I think* something. It doesn't matter that I seem doubtful or indecisive in the sentence. It's still a declarative sentence and takes a period at its end. *(In fact, it's a badly written sentence. But that doesn't matter, either, in relation to what we're talking about. Even a bad declarative sentence gets a period at its end.)*

There's a kind of declarative sentence (or statement of fact) that doesn't seem to be a sentence, but it is. That's what the grammar books call an *elliptical* sentence. Usually an elliptical sentence has only one word in it – like an answer to a question:

Do you think she dyes her hair? No.

The word, *No,* is an elliptical sentence; that means that a lot of words have been left out. If it were not elliptical, it would say, *"No, I don't think she dyes her hair."* But since we don't really need to say, *". . . I don't think she dyes her hair,"* to get our meaning across, we just say, *"No."* And that's a declarative sentence, too, and gets its period.

3rd THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use a period at the end of a command.

A "command" sentence is sometimes called an *imperative* statement (*imperative* comes from the same family of words as *imperial* – meaning how an *emperor* does his thing; i.e., by *giving* commands).

Master sergeants and some mothers never speak except in imperative sentences. For example:

Move out fast. *Stay low.*
Wipe your feet. *Shut your mouth.* *Eat your carrots.*
By home by midnight. *Enjoy yourself.*

Some of these facts may help you recognize a good imperative when you see one:

- The reason imperatives are complete sentences even though the subject is not expressed is that the subject is understood. It's "you." And if someone barks a command at you, you know pretty quickly who is being addressed.
- Often a name is part of a command. For example:
  George, wash those dishes. Clean up that mess, Julie.
- Sometimes commands, or imperatives, are polite. The "emperor" says "please." For example:
  Please feed the dogs. *Miss Jones, please type this report before five.*

  But they are commands, or imperatives, nevertheless. And they get periods.

NOTE: An even more polite form is the command that is expressed as a question; see the 4th THING TO KNOW ABOUT . . . on the next page.

4th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use a period (not a question mark) at the end of an indirect question.

An *indirect question* is a sentence that contains a question but is expressed as a statement of fact. Look at the two following sentences, and you'll see the difference:

He asked, "Do you have a quarter?"	THAT'S A DIRECT QUESTION
He asked whether I had a quarter.	THAT'S AN INDIRECT QUESTION

The indirect question needs only a period.

Here's a special case: Some business communicators in their letters feel that their readers won't get as up-tight if they put periods instead of question marks after questions that they are asking politely. You may have to "proof" letters that have questions like these in them:

Will you please tell us your decision soon. *Would you kindly resubmit your invoice.*
May I suggest that you check the prices in our latest catalog.

These are not *indirect* questions. They're regular direct questions. But still, some companies insist that you break the rule on these super-polite questions, and use a period instead of a question mark. They use the question mark only when they need a yes-or-no answer. And, if that's their rule, you'd better follow it.

NOTE: Each of these super-polite questions could easily be converted into polite imperatives by omitting the first two words in the first two examples, and the first word in the third. In that way, you wouldn't be breaking a rule by using a period.

5th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use the period to separate a whole number from a decimal fraction.

This one is easy. For example:

My car has exactly 101,213.3 miles on the odometer.
The average family now contains 2.3 people and 3.7 pets.
I paid $9.98 for my shirt; it's probably worth $3.98.

Do not space before or after the decimal point (i.e., period).

6th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use a period after most abbreviations.

Here are some common abbreviations which take periods:

Mr.	*St. (street)*	*M.A.*	*A.D.*
Mrs.	*St. (saint)*	*B.A.*	*B.C.*
Ms.	*Jan., Feb.*	*Jr.*	*N.M.*
Dr.	*a.m., A.M.*	*Ph.D.*	*Mon.*
Ave.	*p.m., P.M.*	*D.C.*	*f.o.b.*
ft.	*in.*	*etc.*	*Cal.*

NOTE: Don't abbreviate months with five or fewer letters.

Here are some abbreviations which do not take periods:

CBS	*CIA*	*ms, MS (manuscript)*	*GNP*	*ERDA*	*IOU*
NATO	*FBI*	*R & D*	*PR*	*PERT*	*SOS*
UN	*FICA*	*HEW*	*IQ*	*FYI*	

And the official Postal Service two-letter abbreviations for states uses capital letters, no spaces, no periods; e.g., NM, CO, OK, AZ, AR, ND, SD, NB, MO, TX, LA, IA, KS . . .

And here are some which can go either way:

USA, U.S.A.	*c.o.d. (lowercase)*	*r.p.m.*
USSR, U.S.S.R.	*COD (capitals)*	*rpm*

NOTE: When in doubt, check with an authority in your organization. If he or she doesn't know either, check a recent dictionary.

7th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Like commas, periods ALWAYS are enclosed within any quotation marks.

This is important. Remember it.

"Lie on my couch," she said. "You will tell me your fears."

NEVER do it this way:

He shouted, "Vote for me". OR He pleaded, "Vote for me.".

And yes, even these follow the rule:

He wrote down a "6." wrote down a "7."

8th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use a question mark at the end of a direct question.

Questions are sometimes called *interrogative* sentences. Whatever you call them, they are sentences that usually begin with *who, whom, what, where, when, why, how,* or some form of the verbs *to do, to be,* or *to have.* Here are examples of each:

> Who *took you out last night?* Whom *did you see?* What *did you do?* Where *did you go?* When *did you get home?* Why *were you out so late?* How *will you explain it to Mother?* Do *you want to explain it?* Are *you sure she'll understand?* Have *you considered eloping?*

But sometimes a question starts off as if it were going to be an ordinary declarative sentence; the part that makes it a question doesn't come until the end. Like these:

> *Your mother has some strange ideas,* doesn't she? *I said I'd speak to her,* didn't I?

You still use the question mark. In fact, if anything about the sentence makes it a question, you use the question mark (see the exception for super-polite questions on the previous page).

And then sometimes the question part of a sentence comes in the middle. The rule holds. You still put the question mark at the end. Example:

> *You have enough money,* don't you, *to leave home whenever you like?*

EXCEPTION: Sometimes, when the question part of a sentence occurs in the middle, *and when it is quite long and seems to interrupt the sentence,* you can punctuate it as if it were an interrupter (using dashes or parentheses) and put the question mark inside the sentence, and a period at the end of the sentence. Like this:

> *Jane told me* – or did I misunderstand her? – *that she had left home forever on seven different occasions.*

8th THING TO KNOW, Cont.

Questions can be elliptical, too. (Remember about *elliptical*? That was the word we used to refer to those one-word or few-word declarative sentences without a verb, back on page 6. All we're saying here is that you can have one-word or few-word interrogative, or question, sentences, too. And you treat them the same way, except that you use a question mark at the end, rather than a period.) Examples:

I hear that you're planning to live at home forever. Why?

The *Why?* in that example is an elliptical question. It is a sentence that is short for *"Why are you planning to live at home forever?"*

The point is that these *ellipticals* have to be treated as separate sentences, and, therefore, have to have the right ending punctuation mark (period or question mark) each time. Look at these RIGHT and WRONG examples:

RIGHT	WRONG
Why are you leaving? Because of the quarrel?	*Why are you leaving, because of the quarrel?*
You think you shouldn't have filed it. Why not?	*You think you shouldn't have filed it, why not?*

Sometimes an interrogative sentence (a question sentence) has a series of questions within it. Here you have a choice. If you want to emphasize each question, use a question mark for each – like this:

Have you remembered the ring? the license? the blood test?

If you don't care to emphasize, simply put each question in series with one question mark at the end – like this:

Have you remembered the ring, the license, and the blood test?

9th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

A question mark may go inside or outside of quotation marks.

A question mark goes within quotation marks if the quoted material is a question. For example:

"Why did you call me?" asked Irene.

Or, it may go outside the quotation marks if the entire sentence is a question which quotes a statement. For example:

When did General MacArthur say, "I shall return"?

If both the entire sentence and the quoted material need question marks, use only one -- the one that comes first. This way:

Have you seen the TV show that asks, "Do you know your rights?"

NOT this way:

Wasn't it Terry who whined, " Why does everybody pick on me?"?

10th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

A question mark enclosed in parentheses is used to indicate doubt or uncertainty about a word or phrase within a sentence.

A common usage for such question marks is after a date that may or may not be accurate. For example:

The first part of Henry IV, 1598 (?), is our next assignment.

11th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use an exclamation point at the end of a sentence that expresses strong emotion.

What do we mean by *strong emotion?* Well, like *surprise, urgency, anger, enthusiasm,* or *disbelief.* Here are some examples:

Harold, it's really you!
The house is on fire!
*You *†&%+&!, sneaky, low-down crook!*
Let's do it!
How could you treat me so! (Note that this has the form of a question, but that it wouldn't express as much disbelief with just a question mark.)

Normally, (except in advertising) most businesses do not use exclamation points very often in their letters or reports. The feeling is that exclamation points are undignified. But there's no really good reason not to use them if the idea expressed is a strong one.

Still, it is true that exclamation points can be overused. All the exclamation points in the world won't make a dull story exciting. For example:

I walked home from the bus stop! No one had picked up the letters in the mail box! I opened the door and walked into the kitchen! There was mother with her head in the oven! "So suicide is the only way out, mother!" I said! "No!" She replied! "I'm just cleaning the oven!"

WITH QUOTES – Like question marks, exclamation points can go either inside or outside of quotation marks, depending upon the meaning. *See 9th THING TO KNOW . . . p. 14.*

12th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use the semicolon to separate two independent clauses.

A semicolon is a temporary STOP sign. It says, "This is the end of one complete thought, but there's another related complete thought coming up."

Another way to know when it is proper to use a semicolon is to ask yourself, "Could I use a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor,* or *for,* usually) plus a comma here?" Or could I substitute a period for the semicolon here, and make it two sentences?" All three of the following are correct:

SEPARATING TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES WITH A CONJUNCTION AND A COMMA:

Susan bought a new car, and Jack bought a used one.

SEPARATING TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES INTO TWO SENTENCES:

Susan bought a new car. Jack bought a used one.

SEPARATING TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES WITH A SEMICOLON:

Susan bought a new car; Jack bought a used one.

What's the difference? Most good writers think that separation-by-conjunction gives a feeling of additional information, that separation-by-periods gives a feeling of "related-but-still-separate," and that separation-by-semicolon gives a feeling that the clauses are almost completely identical in importance. The main thing to know is that this is really the main function of the semicolon.

13th THING TO KNOW ABOUT PERIODS, QUESTIONS, EXCLAMATIONS, AND SEMICOLONS:

Use the semicolon to separate elements of a sentence that already contain commas.

Sometimes sentences get pretty complicated, and this rule for the use of semicolons helps to uncomplicate them. Imagine, for example, a sentence containing a series of names, each followed by an appositive (which, remember, has to be set off by commas; see the booklet, SHORT STOPS). Here it is with and without semicolons:

Mrs. Jones, the President, Mr. Kent, the Treasurer, and Ms. Nowlin, the Chief Justice, attended the meeting.

That sentence says that five people attended the meeting: (1) Mrs. Jones, (2) the President, (3) Mr. Kent, (4) the Treasurer, and (5) Ms. Nowlin, the Chief Justice. Or at least you could read it that way. But put semicolons in the right places, and there's no doubt that only three attended:

Mrs. Jones, the President; Mr. Kent, the Treasurer; and Ms. Nowlin, the Chief Justice, attended the meeting.

Another way to think of it is that the semicolon can serve as a "super-comma" when commas won't do the trick by themselves.

WITH QUOTES: Semicolons ALWAYS go outside the quotation marks.

Tasks for Practice

TASK 1 – Supply the Punctuation

Fill in each blank with the appropriate punctuation – period, semicolon, question mark, exclamation point, or quotation marks. (Some blanks may not need punctuation.)

___When are you leaving, George___ ___ Julie asked___
___On the 12:10 train___ ___ George replied___ ___
___This town bores me___ How can you stand it, Julie___ ___
___It won't be exciting without you___ ___ admitted Julie___ ___ I guess we'll go back to doing the things we've always done for excitement___ we've always managed to have a good time___ ___
___Who are you talking about___ ___ asked George___ ___
___You've forgotten them already, haven't you___ ___ she answered___
___Let's see – there's Stevie, who never remembers which end of a dandelion to blow on___ Essie, the one you wanted to date until you saw her brother, the pro linebacker___ Val, who's saving second and third gears to use after first is worn out___ and Strange Sam, who shoots pool with a baseball bat and once achieved a double-cushion home run___
Have you really forgotten all the fun we had together___ ___
___Not really___ I remember standing around by the barbershop door and smelling people as they came out___

TASK 1 (continued)

____How can you forget going to the filling station and jumping on the hose and listening to the bell ring____ ____ she asked____

____And the greatest thrill of all – do you remember it____ – was to stay in the car while it was going through the automatic car wash____ ____

____Stop____ ____ he cried____ ____ I can't stand it____ If I'm not on the 12:10 train, I'm going to make sure I'm under it____ ____

The Test

(for Objectives 1 through 13)

For Objective 1 – Match:

___	a.	Period	(1)	Ends a sentence which asks something.
___	b.	Question mark	(2)	Ends a sentence that declares something.
___	c.	Exclamation point	(3)	Ends a sentence filled with emotion.

For Objective 2 – Check the sentences that need periods.

___	a.	Fire	___	e.	Between the trees and the lake
___	b.	I don't know the answer	___	f.	That's a St. Bernard, isn't it?
___	c.	Call the library	___	g.	That's a Dalmatian, dummy
___	d.	Are your friends old or young? Old			

For Objective 3 – Fill in the blanks with the correct word; then write two examples:

a. An imperative statement is one which expresses a _____. Sometimes the subject must be understood – the subject is _____. Sometimes the _____ of the person spoken to is included.

b. Example 1 _____

Example 2 _____

For Objective 4 – In the blanks, put a period if appropriate, a question mark if appropriate.

___ a. Does he know the answer

___ b. He doesn't know the answer, does he

___ c. He said, "I don't know the answer"

___ d. He said, "Why did you ask me"

___ e. He asked whether I knew the answer

___ f. Will all employees please update their time cards before Friday (super-polite)

___ g. Do you have any objections to the plan (yes-or-no answer needed)

For Objective 5 – Write these numbers as figures with decimals:

___ a. One and two-tenths

___ b. Six dollars and fifty cents

___ c. Three and seventy-two-one hundredths per cent

___ d. One and a half

For Objective 6 – Add periods to these abbreviations as necessary:

Mrs. Easton earned a Ph D with a dissertation on the FBI in Wash, D C in 1974. She gave a loan shark in St Clare, Wisc, an IOU dated Sept 9. Now she works for HEW in Dallas, Tex.

For Objective 7 – Check the correctly punctuated sentences:

___ a. "I feel fat." announced the midget sword-swallower.

___ b. Said he, "I will go on a diet".

___ c. "I will swallow only low-carbohydrate swords."

___ d. Then he wrote an article called "The Dangers of Hiccups."

For Objective 8 – Put a question mark or a period, if appropriate, in each blank.

___ a. Why do you torture me so

___ b. You hate me, don't you

___ c. Last spring – or was it the summer before – you hurt my feelings

___ d. You know, don't you, how I hate arguments

___ e. Every year or two we have these arguments. Why

___ f. I ask you, can we go on this way

___ g. I wonder if we should get a divorce

___ h. What will your parents say Your friends Your children

___ i. Do you suppose that the warranty on our wedding has expired

For Objective 9 – Check the sentences which show a correct use of question marks used with quotation marks.

___ a. When was it you asked me, "Are you a cowboy?"?

___ b. I remember when you asked me, "Are you a cowboy?".

___ c. "But do you remember what I told you?" I asked.

___ d. Didn't you say, "I'm not a cowboy; I'm a rodeo rider?"

___ e. No. I asked, "If I were a cowboy, would you still love me?"

___ f. But don't I remember that you said, "I rope calves in the rodeo?"

___ g. I think I said, "If I throw the bull, could you still like me?".

For Objective 10 – Briefly, what does a question mark enclosed in parentheses (?) mean?

For Objective 11 – Mark each sentence true or false:

___ a. Use an exclamation point at the end of a sentence that expresses surprise, urgency, enthusiasm, and the like.
___ b. Exclamation points are common in business writing.
___ c. To make a story more exciting, use lots of exclamation points.
___ d. Exclamation points always go inside any quotation marks.
___ e. Exclamation points may go inside quotation marks.

For Objective 12 – Check the items which show two independent clauses joined appropriately:

___ a. One of my friends was mugged last night; another one was robbed.
___ b. I am going to buy a tear gas gun and I am going to learn to use it.
___ c. I am afraid to walk alone. I like to have a friend with me.
___ d. If you walk with me; I will not be afraid.
___ e. I walked with Sonny last night, but he can't go out tonight.
___ f. He has some work to do, moreover, he is broke.
___ g. I like rich, strong friends; who like me in spite of my fear of the dark.
___ h. I'm afraid of the dark; therefore, I walk only on well-lit streets.

For Objective 13 – True or False:

___ a. A semicolon can take the place of any comma, any time.
___ b. Semicolons replace commas when the material the commas are setting off already has commas within it.
___ c. One usage of the semicolon is as a "super-comma."
___ d. Semicolons may go either inside or outside of any quotation marks, depending upon the meaning.